

fortunato by gearyoak

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Summary:

“ - e'll be waiting... Has your life taken a turn?” The voice asks. Steve can't help but scoff a little. Leans back against the rusted, weathered metal of an old world truck, kicks out his left leg to stretch it out a little. He doesn't have to keep bandages on it anymore, but he still gives Junction 15 a wide berth.

Storms. Bullets. Sand. Wind.

Has Steve's life taken a turn?

He scoffs again.

He's not even gonna go there.

It's almost as if the voice knows what he's thinking, too. It continues on with, “Do troubles beset you? Has fortune left you behind?” And it's like he's smiling when he says it. Like he knows Steve's sat smack dab in the middle of a war between democracy and dictatorship and he only found himself there after digging out of his own grave. And the voice has the nerve to tease him for it.

There's laughter there, there's playfulness. Lightheartedness.

Steve's entranced.

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a fallout dead money au

fortunato

Author's Note:

hoooooooooooo boy

ok listen. this is indulgence at its peak. this one's for me.

my favorite game of all time is fall out new vegas and my favorite dlc - while all incredible (except honest hearts all my homies hate honest hearts) - is dead money. i recently replayed it and i couldn't get this au of steve as the courier and billy as christine out of my head.

HOWEVER. there was an immediate problem - i'm lazy and also feel like the rest of the dlc companions don't really fit the any of the characters in the show. i understand i'm like heavily rewriting the modern part for the dlc and could've changed around more of the companion personalities to better fit existing stranger things characters, but i'll reiterate - lazy.

i played around with the idea of Will and the Mind Flayer as dog/god, but it felt weird putting a child in that position. and dean domino is such an integral part to the past story of the sierra madre that i felt i couldn't change his character or some of the weight would be lost. so i'm writing around it!!!!!!!!!!!!!! it'll be bad so suspend ur disbelief!!!!!!!!!!

just in case you haven't played this game (u should) here's some explanations on what's going on since i suck at world building [here](#) which is the opening of the game itself and also gives the basic rundown of the main two factions. then [here's](#) the intro to the dead money dlc.

It all starts with a radio.

Actually, it starts with a radio broadcast.

There aren't a lot of songs that survived the bombs. Even fewer that are catchy or have holorecordings that aren't fizzy and saturated to hell. Realistically, there's only about thirty songs that cycle on Radio New Vegas -

And it isn't Mr. New Vegas' fault, either. That's not what he's trying to say. It's just.

There's only so many times a guy can hear *It's a Sin to Tell a Lie*. Worst is, it's only been a few months since he started travelling the Mojave Desert again. If he's already sick of it at this point, he can't imagine what it'd be like if he hadn't lost his memory due to being shot in the head.

Twice.

So it's the middle of the day. He's found shade by sitting next to a hollowed out prewar semi, Vault 13 canteen at his hip, and Steve starts tuning his radio.

It's not something he makes a habit out of. Pipboys are prewar tech and truthfully, Steve's not very apt at *modern* tech let alone things that've deteriorated and show age. The last time he tried finding a new station, his speakers spit out static for days until he could make it back to the Strip. That took a long time, too, because he had to shut the Pipboy off entirely in order to keep his sanity, which lead to him getting lost.

It'd been a whole thing, but he's desperate now, and he's seen Dustin fiddle with it enough that he thinks he kinda has an idea on what he's doing. He's seen the other track signals by just having access to the station - he showed Steve how to do that, too. It was desperation, showing him what button to press on which screen and slowly saying, "Mark those coordinates on your map and someone there will help you". Steve had made a face at him, snatched back the Pipboy, and decided not to touch the radio again.

But that was a month ago, and he's got such a goddamn need for something new. He figures that he's close enough to Novac that he

won't get lost if he does fuck it up - which he *won't*. Either way he's positive that if he walks up the crest of this hill to the left, he'd see Dinky the Dinosaur off in the distance. Or.

Steve looks up at the sun, then at the time.

No, the hill to the right, and Dinky would be that way.

Wait.

He looks up and down the broken down interstate, up one way, down the other. Bites the inside of his cheek thoughtfully.

He returns to his Pipboy and starts tuning.

And for a few minutes it's waves after waves of buzzing messes. Some whooping, and sometimes just quiet humming. It goes long enough to the point where he gets a little nervous. Dread starts to set in. He can already hear Dustin's long-suffering mumble of *Steve...*

But then he hears it. Passes over whispers definitive syllables.

He gets *really* excited. Smiling smugly to himself as he narrows down the channel. Already feels like the walk back to the Strip underneath the sun won't be so grueling with this victory. He's ready to show it off to the little brat when he gets home.

It clears up after a few more seconds of aimless tuning. He still really doesn't know how he got this to work, but his guessing paid off, because a single voice comes through. Smooth like honey over the jagged edges of static he'd been listening to for the past ten minutes.

The voice belonged to a man, rasps in all the right ways. Steve hears it and takes his hand off the dial immediately, like maybe even a nudge in the wrong direction would lose him - it. The voice.

" - e'll be waiting... Has your life taken a turn?" The voice asks. Steve can't help but scoff a little. Leans back against the rusted, weathered metal of an old world truck, kicks out his left leg to stretch it out a little. He doesn't have to keep bandages on it anymore, but he still gives Junction 15 a wide berth.

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"If so, the Sierra Madre, in all its glory, is inviting you to *begin again*."

His head tilts to one side, thoughtful. He's heard of the Sierra Madre before. Some scavenger making his way through the 188 Trading post right after Vault 11. He talked to Steve about it a little; really he talked to anyone who'd listen. Went on and on about how it was an oasis for treasure hunters. That it was a resort. Heaven on earth. That he was going. And, sure, it isn't odd that Steve would see a trader one day and then never again. It's the wasteland. It's the Mojave Desert. Shit just happens. He might've never made it.

But then there's this broadcast. There's the promises the man is making to Steve. *Gamble in our casino*, he tells Steve. *Take in the theater. Stay in our exclusive executive suites*.

Maybe the guy did make it there. Maybe he thought it was good enough to stay.

Steve fiddles some more, ignores the knobs so he doesn't lose the signal. The Pipboy's screen flickers, shifts, and there's numbers on the screen. Coordinates, ones that he repeats out loud to himself over and over until he pulls up the map the Pipboy had preinstalled.

The signal's source is a few miles east. Not far at all.

He looks at the sun again.

Then he stands up, takes care of his leg out of habit. Hooks his canteen back onto his belt.

Starts walking - away from New Vegas. Toward the broadcast's source. The Sierra Madre.

And the voice of the man, the voice that he leaves on as he walks.

"So, if life's worries have got you down, if you need an escape from your troubles, or if you just need a chance to *begin again* - join us. Let go and leave the world behind. Come to the Sierra Madre. We'll be waiting."

Then it loops. Right back, starting with, "Has your life taken a turn?" Follows up with the same speech, but -

Steve leaves it on.

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It's well past sundown by the time he reaches the furthest east he's ever been.

At first he thought the signal came from the sad little NCR camp set up just on the cliff. And it's not like Steve's on *horrible* terms with the Republic, it's just - it's wildly possible that someone there is sending out the broadcast and just isn't telling him.

Because there absolutely is no goddamn casino that Steve can see.

He overcomes the crest of the hill right after the camp, looks out at the flat horizon, sees nothing but sand. The dark blue of the oncoming night sky. He sighs, tells himself he isn't let down. Really, he shouldn't be let down.

Still, he picks up his left arm from where it's been hanging by his side, lifts it enough to look at the Pipboy screen. The volume's been turned low, so he could only hear the murmurs of the voice, but now that it's close again, he can hear him.

"Let your eyes take in the *luxurious* expanse of the desert under starlit skies. Gaze straight into the sunset on our villa rooftops."

"What villa?" Steve asks, gesturing a little at the luxurious expanse of *nothing* before returning to the dials. Double checking the coordinates.

Yeah, no, it should be *here*. Right where he's standing. Maybe - maybe he did it wrong. Maybe he really is hopeless with shit like this. Maybe he should just ask Dustin to look at it for him. Maybe he should ask around the camp again, and if he turns up with nothing maybe he'll just ask for a bed for the night.

Then he looks down and sees it.

Almost like a grated sewer cap, circular and sturdy looking steel - a bunker entrance tucked into a small nook into the bottom of the cliff. Steve doesn't even think about it. Maybe he should've. He just starts climbing down. Hands calloused enough that he only loses his grip a few times, only *nearly* stumbles down to his death via large sharp rock once.

Disturbed gravel is still following him down the cliffside by the time he's reached the draining grate, rolling down by his feet and kicking up dust. Steve ignores it to instead peer down through the bars and - there's light. He's able to see a ladder, prongs hammered into the concrete wall below. Wherever the light's coming from, it flickers but holds up. Must be a small room down there, not too many steps down.

He looks back to his Pipboy, checks the time. It really is late. Maybe he should wait, head back home and return with Dustin or even Max. They know more about the Mojave than he does, and it's always good to have someone at your back.

But the wind settles, or it's not as harsh down here, the gravel halts,

and Steve can hear it. A voice. Very, *very* quiet.

Steve curls his fingers into the grate and finds that it lifts easy, rusty creak sounding like an invitation.

The room is small when he gets down to it, but there's stairs leading even further into what Steve can only guess is the main bunker. After the size of the room hits him, the smell does. At the end of it across from the ladder leading back up, like it crawled over there, is a body.

Headless.

It's not the most gruesome thing Steve's seen. All he does is scrunch his nose at it a little bit, yet still moves closer. He grabs the body by its shoulder and it's stiff with rigor mortis, but falls onto its back easy enough. Now, he's no scientist and he's absolutely no doctor, but he's seen and made enough dead things that he starts to notice stuff.

The first thing he clues into is that whoever this was has been dead for a while.

The second thing is the strange indents on what's left of the person's neck. He thumbs over them before he can think about it, then makes a soft, disgusted noise at himself and wipes his hands off on his pant leg.

The third is that there's not much to scavenge off of the body. It's got on a stark white jumpsuit, no discernable markings so he's got no idea if they were part of some gang. There's none that he can think of that goes for the purity of white, at least not around here. In the only two pockets, the person managed to stuff an entire bottle of vodka and a still-sealed box of potato chips. Steve leaves it with both.

Steve stands from where he'd knelt beside the body and his eyes catch on a poster stuck up right above the corpse. It's of a man, styled almost like a modest pinup. Drawn to the likeness of *someone* because it's too detailed to be a made-up character. Colored in shades of black and white, the young man leans up against the theater-esque border of the poster, dark eyebrows furrowed together, even darker eyes shining at something he's laughing at off to the left. His hair's slicked

back, his legs are *long* in his suit. Arms crossed over a slim chest.

He stands over the words, *Sierra Madre*, thin yet bold lettering.

Brown-red blood is stained into the paper and the wall around it, sliced through the middle of it like a divider.

He should maybe take this as an omen. This, and the rest of the graffiti painted on the walls as he looks around more.

Left my heart in the Sierra Madre, someone had written, right before the descent of the stairs.

Gone to Sierra Madre, another had left behind.

Steve swallows - not nervous. Maybe apprehensive. He comes back around to the top of the stairs, footsteps echoing in the otherwise empty concrete square. Peering down the steps, he sees more graffiti painted on the lip of the ceiling before the hallway below - *SEERA MADRe* with an arrow pointing down.

Before he continues, he sucks in a deep, slow breath that fills his cheeks until they're round. Then, he lets it go all at once, quickly, with a quiet, "*H'okay*," before he follows the arrow. Follows what he hopes isn't a dead man's prompting.

It almost certainly is one.

He doesn't know why he hasn't turned around and gone home.

Spinning the opening mechanism on the door when he comes to it, he finds himself at the start of another hallway. This one dimly lit - he can't see the end of it. It splits off almost immediately into two more hallways, one completely caved in, rubble blocking the path and he doesn't even attempt to pick his way through.

The other hall ends in yet another door, this one secured. However, there's a terminal installed right next to it and the only entry in it is the door's access command. Steve blinks at it, scoffs, but then has to wonder - *this* computer might have been locked. Maybe it belonged to the dead guy upstairs. Thought he was safe down here but got his head blown off before he could lock down his bunker, leaving his

terminal open without a password.

Steve unlocks the door.

Inside is what appears to be a research lab. His footsteps echo on the steel flooring as he ventures further in slowly, eyes on the ground and searching for tripwires. It's weird, though, because there aren't any. Paranoia hardly ever ended with a few password locked terminals and doors.

Though maybe the equipment in here was too valuable for a few landmines to be laying around. There's a chalkboard propped up on a workbench against one wall riddled with smeared equations, a power armor helmet keeping weight at one corner so it doesn't slide. More tables are lined up in the small space, covered with enough scrap metal and old prewar tools that it reminds Steve of a preserved old world workshop classroom, or maybe a mechanic's shop without the garage.

And then there's the chemistry set; singed-bottom glass beakers and vials long gone cold. Dusty. There's still liquid left over and Steve knows well enough not to touch shit like that. Nancy always got on him for it. One of the beakers catches his eye, though, because even though the temperature is low, it's steaming - or maybe fuming? Despite better ideas, Steve leans in to look a little closer; whatever's inside is red, a dark bronze. It puddles inside like a powder but dusts up like someone's gently blowing on it, yet Steve doesn't feel a breeze.

Finally good sense takes over again - he leaves it alone.

In the very corner, next to a cot, sits an old office L-desk. A terminal screen flickers green, but this one needs an access code when Steve wakes it up by hitting a key. He ignores this, too.

He's running his fingers along the spines of the books lined up on a shelf when it kicks on - the voice from before. The voice from his radio. Coming from further down the hallway, the one he couldn't see the end of.

It's gentle, still, the man's voice. Humorous and mirthful. *"Has your*

life taken a turn? Do troubles beset you? Has fortune left you behind?"

This time, for a reason Steve can't discern, a chill trickles down the length of his spine. It's a presence, now. Strange and weighty. Like there's someone else down here, followed him in through the sewer grate.

Or maybe had been waiting for him, like the corpse upstairs.

Slowly, Steve turns. Follows the voice to its source, rounds the corner of the branching hallway and looks down the main one. Sees, now, that the end opens up to a larger room.

A spotlight had been turned on at some point. It shines down brightly, so the only thing Steve can see clearly is the radio sat on a small table, like it's being presented on a pedestal.

" - if you need a chance to begin again," the voice beckons, "join us. Let go and leave the world behind."

Something hisses above Steve, right as he comes within two feet of the entryway, and then it *pops*, loud and snapping, making Steve yelp in shock. He looks up, eyes landing on a vent over his head and it's spitting out some kind of smoke or -

Steve gasps, because it's suddenly hard to breathe, and he realizes it's got a taste. Gas.

He coughs, closes his eyes from the force of it, and when he opens them his vision is blurred. Wobbly, his legs give out, shoulder slams into the metal plating of the wall to his left, but he can't catch himself. Slides down to the floor.

"Come to the Sierra Madre."

Distantly, he thinks, *stop breathing it in, stop breathing it in*, but he's choking, also thinking, *I need to breathe, I need to fucking breathe* -

Black swallows up the edges of his sight until there's nothing left. Until even his labored breathing is silent, until all he can hear is the voice, the young man whispering to him with a smile in his tone -

“We’ll be waiting.”

Author's Note:

fun fun fun :^)

if something needs tagged u WILL let me know
(desperate)